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## **Commentary**

### **INFLUENCES ON FOOD CHOICE AND INTAKE** **Commentary from the 1st and 2nd Food Choice** **Conferences**

#### **The Evaluation of Food Products as Consequence of** **Product Applications**

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Over the last decades, demographic changes in the western world and changes in lifestyles have had an enormous impact on eating patterns. Furthermore, the traditional caring role of the housewife in feeding her family is changing; nowadays, she is much more concerned about the relation between eating and wellbeing. Consequently, the demand for added value and wholesome foods has increased markedly.

The ultimate choice of food products is very much individually and contextually determined. Therefore, the perceived sensory quality and the context wherein the food product is used should be basic elements for domain-specific market segmentation.

The present study focussed on the evaluation of products as a function of their performance within a certain context, and their value-expressive (image) attributes across consumer types.

The hypothesis is that the value-expressive attributes of products will mostly be influenced by differences between consumer types, while differences in product evaluations, because based on their actual performance, will occur mostly between applications.

A research study of cooking behaviour, meal preparation and eating habits was carried out in several European countries. This study comprised two phases:

1. exploratory observation, in which qualitative, descriptive and diagnostic understanding of food habits, cooking behaviour and the needs and expectations of housewives with respect to the preparation of the family meal were obtained
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This commentary is based on a paper presented at the First Food Choice Conference, held in Brussels in July 1992.

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2. a food habits survey, to obtain a precise understanding of which food products are used by specific consumers for the different cooking regimes to constitute the family meal. This survey consisted of three modules:
  - (i) a contact interview to obtain larder-stocking behaviour, brand awareness and brand evaluations for different preparations (product typology)
  - (ii) a diary in which respondents recorded in detail the cooking process for each meal occasion and registered the quantities of specific food products used for these preparations (quantity by purpose).
  - (iii) a recall visit to collect attitudes towards cooking the meal and taking care of the family (consumer typology).

These databases from two European countries illustrated the effect produced on the performance of several food products by distinct groups of consumers applying different cooking regimes to the preparation of a meal. Consumer types were defined on the basis of how and for what purpose the meal was prepared. Types such as the "traditional housewife" and the "interested cook" were distinguishable in both countries. Differences across the different consumer types in the kind of food preparation and the frequency with which particular food products were used were observed.

These findings have major implications for new-product development and communication about products. For example, it is important to know whether the basic role of a food product is to contribute to the sensory quality of the recipe on the meal, or to facilitate the cooking process.

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